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Verses By Bertha
Germeaux Woods

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VERSES BY

BERTHA GERNEAUX WOODS

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TO

A. F. W.

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B. G. W.

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VERSES BY
BERTHA GERNEAUX WOODS

WHO WAS IT?

Said the baby to a robin,
"Birdie, show me how to fly."
But the robin did not hear her,
And he flew off toward the sky.

Said the baby to a skylark,
"Will you show me, little bird?"
But the skylark floated past her,
And he answered not a word.

Someone—it was not the robin,
Nor the brown lark from the sky—
Someone coming in the twilight
Taught the baby how to fly.

ELUSION.

"Baby, stay!" from wildrose hedges
And along the meadow edges
  Chirp the crickets at their play,
While the little river flowing,
Stops a moment in its going,
  Just to echo, "Baby, stay!"

So she lingers, doubtful, smiling,
While the odors faint, beguiling,
  From the clover-tops arise,
And the southern wind upraises
Gentle heads of meadow daisies
  With imploring golden eyes.

From the treetops thrushes calling,
Send a flood of music falling
  To the mosses green below;
And the while she stops to listen
Even common pebbles glisten
  To beguile her not to go.

Now the southern wind upraises
Baffled, sad-eyed meadow daisies,
  Fading since that summer day
When the thrushes, gladly singing,
Pretty, downward notes were flinging,
  And the baby slipped away.

IN THE ORCHARD.

"Feet as small as baby's, are
Quite unfit to travel far.
Rough-edged stones would cut and bruise
Little feet in worsted shoes.
Close beside us all the day
Such a tender thing must stay."
So we said, the playful breeze
Shaking petals from the trees
Over her, the while she sat
Cooing softly. What was that
Which her face upturned to see?
Just some yellow coated bee
With a freight of pollen brought
From the apple-boughs, we thought.

Still the wild bees drone and hum,
And the tinted petals come
In a fragrant shower down,
But the baby's muslin gown
Now no longer stretches fair
Under them. The fuzzy hair
Stirs no longer, though the breeze
Ruffles yet the apple trees.
Feet as small as baby's are
Quite unfit to travel far.
Rough-edged stones would cut and bruise
Little feet in worsted shoes.
Close beside us, did we say,
Such a tender thing must stay?

PUSH.

He is standing in the meadow,
  But he cannot see the skies,
For a bonnet green and fuzzy
  Blinds his eager little eyes.

Every day he tugs and pushes,
  Tries to get the strings undone,
Till, one morning, when he wakens,
  He can really see the sun.

For his bonnet strings have loosened,
  And his yellow head is up,
Bluebirds on their way to breakfast
  Nod to little buttercup.

TOGETHER.

Where the clovers grow the reddest,
  Grandpa and the baby lie,
Smiling softly at each other
  And the white clouds in the sky.
Neither very far from heaven,
  She but lately left, and he
With his feet turned toward the valley
  Where the longer shadows be.

Still the clovers nod and beckon,
  They have secret thoughts forsooth,
Grown more sweet since they were learned by
  Grandpapa and little Ruth.
Neither very far from heaven,
  Was it strange that they should slip
Past the border line together,
  Angels watching lest they trip.

A PRAYER FOR THE NEW YEAR.

In the cold a snowbird pausing
  Sings a little song that cheers,
Though the evergreens are dropping
  In slow grief their frozen tears,
For the old year that is fading
  To the place of vanished years.

Oh thou Christ, whose great heart throbbeth
  Over all defenseless things,
Thou who givest to the snowbird
  Feathered coat and downy wings,
And a heart so brave and cheery
  That in coldest times it sings,

Give like gifts to us who falter
  At the parting of the ways,
With the Old Year left behind us,
  And a host of untried days
Waiting that we see but dimly
  Through the thick surrounding haze.

Give us wings, oh Christ, to bear us
  From the reach of ruth and wrong,
And when some who take the footpaths
  Find the days too cold and long,
Let us linger near a moment,
  Just to sing the snowbird's song.

ARBUTUS.

"Wake," said the Spring, "I am lonely, my darlings,
Shake the sleep quick from your eyes,
I long for the sight of you; come to your mother;
Arise, little children, arise."

Violets shivered and moaned through the covers,
"Oh, 'tis so windy and chill!"
"My dream is so sweet; let me finish it," murmured
Dear little gold Daffodil.

Then spoke Arbutus, her tender cheek flushing,
Raising her head from the snow;
"I will get up, mother, dear. Do you want me?
But I am so little, you know."

"Want you, my darling?" said Spring, "Oh, come quickly,"
And down on the pink face she smiled.
"Don't tell your brothers and sisters, my baby,
But you are my favorite child."

IN THE WOOD.

I can pull the snowy petals
From the shy anemone,
And the timid bluets falter
When they catch a glimpse of me.

When arbutus indiscreetly
Throws its fragrance in my face,
To the left and right I hurry,
Till I find its hiding place.

And my sacrilegious fingers
Tear the pretty thing apart,
Till I know the inmost secrets
That are hidden in its heart.

Then, beneath the trees I linger,
Wander o'er the shaded ground,
Over dead leaves just to listen
To the pleasant crunching sound.

You have heard these old leaf carpets
Snap and crackle as you walk,
And have seen the violet rising
On its slender little stalk.

Do you think I feel no rapture
As these blossoms brush my sleeves?
Do I stop to count the petals
And the notches in the leaves?

Keep your secret, purple treasure.
Not one petal would I tear.
What care I how many sepals
Or how many leaves you bear?

TO A DANDELION.

Could I only find a way to enter,
I would rest within your golden center.
I would feel the sunshine with *your* feeling,
When into your disk the dawn comes stealing.
I would live my life out as yours passes,
When the sun looks down upon the grasses,
Where you sway, with heat that burns and lingers,
I would feel your slender sepal-fingers
Wrapping me within your golden treasure.
From the light shut out, with drowsy pleasure
We should sink to sleep, nor care to waken,
Till at last, by breezes lightly shaken,
You and I, aroused, would find unnumbered
Soft white wings made ready while we slumbered.

MAYFLOWER.

"Poor last year's leaves," the pussy willows gray,
Just opened to the sunshine murmured low,
"What made you linger all the winter through?
You should have dropped away long months ago."

They shook their heads, those old arbutus leaves,
"The winter through we stayed and did not sleep,
Because," they said, "a secret very dear
Was given us till spring to guard and keep."

The May day dawned and clustered faces pink
Tossed in the breeze and dropped a timid kiss
Upon those old brown leaves that whispered low
"We waited all the winter time for this."

AN APRIL FLOWER.

"Little flower, if I could understand what you are,
I should know what God and man is."

Tennyson.

I wonder, April token, if you hold
The secret that the poet's flower hid
Within its covert in the "crannied wall."
Perhaps if you should raise each golden lid

That I might seek to fathom in your eyes
The tender thoughts entrusted you to keep,
I, too, could read some word of "God and man,"
And those dim mysteries of life and sleep.

I fancy you could teach me, for you come
From out your winter grave in robes that shine,
As long ago came One who in His eyes
Held light of both the human and divine.

AN AWAKING.

Such a lovely world the Jonquil
  Raised her pretty head to see.
"From the brown earth to the sunshine
  I am glad to change," said she.

"Children said 'good-bye' last autumn,
  Not 'good-night,' they fancied then
That the chilly ground would freeze me
  So I would not rise again.

"But I only slept"—the Jonquil
  Softly waved her golden cup,
"Dreaming of the warm days coming
  Till the Easter woke me up."

IMPRINTED.

She used to stray among the meadow flowers.
  Their petals brightened as they saw her pass.
They reached detaining hands until she lingered,
  And spread her little white dress in the grass.

And she would talk with them; her gentle whispers
  Imprinted on the disks in lasting way,
Till now, as often as I pass the meadow,
  They breathe out softly words she used to say.

The daisy holds her pretty childish secrets
  Within its heart and grieves to yield them up.
A tender little echo of her laughter
  Sounds softly from the yellow jonquil's cup.

APRIL DAYS.

A little hand within my own, I went
Where green young grasses waved. The odors sent
From fluted jonquils were so fine and sweet,
We walked those pleasant ways with buoyant feet.
That little face so near, no bird nor bee
Flew fast as April days, I said, for me.

Today I walk apart as one who dreams,
For now the brim of every jonquil seems
Transformed into a frame, to have and hold
One tender, pictured face and hair of gold.
Alone and hushed, I tread the grassy ways.
Oh, must you last forever, April days?

JOHNNY JUMP UP.

"Jump up, Johnny," April said,
As she tossed her sunny head.
"Jump up, Johnny, it is spring;
Don't you hear the robins sing?"

Johnny listened in surprise,
Shook the frost-scales from his eyes;
"April," said he, "are you here?"
Answered April, "Yes, you dear."

Sad November's hoary hair
Streaming in the frosty air
Covered Johnny o'er with rime;
"Sleep," said he, "you'll wake some time."

"Yes," said Johnny, "I'll remember,
I am not afraid, November."
Then he bowed his withered head.
"I shall wake again," he said.

TO A BLUET.

With the southern wind swaying you, sweet,
And the weeds pressing close to your feet,
With the dust of the road in your eye,
What say you, blue bit of the sky?

God planted you there, so you grow
Just as bright and as blue as you know
He meant you to be—you are glad,
And nothing you see makes you sad?

Sway on, I must leave you, and yet
Little bluet, I will not forget
The message I read in your eye,
You tiny blue bit of the sky.

DANDELIONS.

We scarcely heeded how the sun
  Sent down its golden bars,
For scattered through our meadow lay
  A host of fallen stars.

Our eyes were dazzled by their light
  The little while they burned,
But by and by they flickered out,
  And then to ashes turned.

THE RETURN.

"Child, oh child, come back," I call her,
Call across the gray-green sea
Of the swaying meadow-grasses,
But no answer comes to me.

For the dead send back no message,
And the child that once was I
Went long since. I fancy she was
Just a little loth to die.

And perhaps upon the farther
Side of this green meadow-sea,
Little sad wraith, she is standing,
Stretching woeful arms to me.

Though I neither see nor hear her,
She is sobbing low, I ween,
She who always saw the message
God had hidden in the green

Of His growing things, who turned her
Joyous child-face to the sky,
Seeing there, undimmed, the meaning
Hidden in the daisy's eye.

* * *

Something seems to part the grasses,
Just a light wind, south-born, sweet?
Rather do the green plumes rustle
With the passing of her feet.

And no longer spreads between us
Greenness of that meadow-sea,
God has let His June-time glory
Bring the young child back to me.

THE COMING OF JOY.

He sought for joy, with eager, outstretched arms,
  But ever she grew fleeter to elude
His longing grasp—among the haunts of men,
  Or in the quiet courts of solitude.

Outwearied he forsook the quest at last,
  "Since grief my portion is," he murmured, "then
My strife henceforth shall be to make less keen
  The throbbing heartaches of my brother-men."

So passed his days, till one fair morning broke,
  The sunshine taking place of shadows dim.
His eyes grew wide, half doubting what they saw,
  For joy at last had come to bide with him.

THE OVEN-BIRDS.

Little brown birds, I have found you, led
Half by the sound of your startled tread
Over the woodland paths made brown
By last year's leafage that drifted down,
Half by the hurried, insistent notes
That ring so clear from your tender throats.
"Teacher! Teacher!" Do you, too, yearn
Some of the spring's deep thoughts to learn?

What are the questions that trouble you?
I have been puzzling the morning through
Over the secrets these young days hold,
The glory hid in the burnished gold
Of dandelions, the wondrous way
That new life springs from the old decay.
What does it all betoken? I
Am so unknowing of whence and why!
"Teacher! Teacher!" my heart's cry, too,
Little brown birds, let me sing with you.

THE MAPLE.

In the April time how red it glowed,
To caressing winds its tassels freeing,
All its veins astir with glad young life
Flushing with the ecstacy of being.

Now the autumn comes, with saddened eyes,
Takes her weary way along the edges
Of the forest, turning here and there,
Just to hush a bird-song in the hedges.

On the tossing trees she lays her hand,
Stilling veins too quick a rhythm keeping;
But the maple, thrilling at her touch,
Flushes once again—for joy of sleeping!

A GOLDEN MESSAGE.

I walk among the grassy mounds,
  And read the words that love has cut
Upon the marbles keeping guard
  Of those who lie with eyelids shut.

I think of words the Saviour spoke,
  To clear the shadow from the eyes
Of those who knew that they must sleep
  And shrank in trembling, "Ye shall rise."

The April sunbeams shyly touch
  A crocus with a golden heart.
The sod's detaining hold escaped,
  It stands with petals spread apart

Like wings prepared for flight. I see
  The message shine its gold heart through.
"As I have risen from the earth,
  Some sunny morning so will you!"

HILDA.

The banquet table is spread and waiting
For Laddie, Hilda and ladies fair,
The banquet hall has a blue-arched ceiling,
A soft green pattern each portiere.

The throats of a hundred birds a-tremble,
The whole air thrills with the liquid sound.
Sweet little Hilda, she smiles benignly
Upon her guests as they gather round.

Never before was a hall so spacious,
With blue sky ceiling, and portieres
A maze of emerald swaying branches,
The table's a flat gray stone—who cares?

The silver set and the cut glass pitcher,
The china cups and the saucers, all
Are an apronful of the red bronze treasures
The stately oak in the night let fall.

But never was sweeter, more gracious hostess
Than Hilda under that old oak tree.
The china ladies they smile serenely,
And Laddie's eyes are like stars to see.

For oh, but the world is a bright and fair one,
And, oh, but the hours go by so soon
When one is young and the hair is gold, and
A year's joy lurks in an afternoon.

The years have flown, and the fair child Hilda's
Tresses turned to a chestnut hue.
Her cut glass now has an unfeigned lustre,
Her silver service rings clear and true.

They talk of a hundred pleasant nothings,
  She and her circle of smiling guests,
And none more gaily than Lady Hilda
  Leads the laugh and the merry jests.

Yet I fancy under her silken bodice
  A sigh comes quick which she crushes down,
As she thinks of the lad and the china ladies
  Who drank their tea from the acorns brown.

For oh, but the world is a bright and fair one,
  And oh, but the hours go by so soon,
When one is young and the hair is gold, and
  A year's joy lurks in an afternoon.

GOD'S LITTLE GIRL.

She left her home in the starry ways,
And reached our arms in the April days,
We thought to keep her and hold her here,
And *our* little girl we called the dear.

One pleasant eve when the sun had dipped
Out of our sight and the stars had slipped
Silently back to their wonted ways,
She turned her face with a wistful gaze

Up to the blue of the arching skies,
We knew by the look in her pretty eyes
And the smile that brightened her small face so,
It was time for God's little girl to go.

A kiss we dropped on her curly head.
"Sweet little heart, good-bye," we said.
Then, unafraid, though the way was dim,
God's little girl went back to him.

THE ANSWER.

"God keep my dear little girl," I said,
"My fair little girl in her snow white bed.
Let sleep be good to her, dreams be fair
That push their way through her sunny hair."

Stars shine out in the evening sky;
Not in the little white bed that I
Thought so safe does the darling sleep,
Wide-eyed daisies and clovers keep

Watch above her. The prayer I said
Nightly over the small white bed
I know is needed no more—no more,
She never was kept so safe before.

A SEARCH.

I looked on the hillside, I looked in the meadow,
Down in the grass tufts and up in the tree.
I parted the twigs of the wet laurel bushes,
But only the shining of dew could I see.

Under the spikes of the waving sweet clover,
Down in the buttercups stooping to look,
Then for a moment I fancied I saw it
Gleam from the pebbles that shone in the brook.

I found what I sought for, but not in the meadow,
And not in the cowslips that grew by the rill,
Not in the brook as it flashed to allure me,
But hiding itself in a yellow bird's trill.

FOR VANITY'S SAKE.

He was a happy and gay little singer,
With lyrics of summer pent up in his throat;
He sang from the dawn till the sunset, but always
He kept for the evening his tenderest note.

Then, when the little gold stars were all twinkling,
He flew to the brim of his brown woven nest,
And twittered soft nothings, received sleepy answers
That made a glad quiver creep into his breast

And ruffle his fuzzy red feathers. There surely
Was never a little bird gladder than he.
No other nest with so downy a lining
Was ever more cozily moored in a tree.

The air of the forest is heavy with fragrance,
As gay-tinted flowers their petals uncurl;
But two flashing wings that God colored as brightly
Are rigid and still—for the whim of a girl.

The little brook catches its breath as it passes,
A shadow lies dark on the woods' brooding face—
A bit of God's music and sunshine gone from them—
Fettered by ribbons and meshes of lace.

A full-throated chorus, yet summer is grieving
Over the songs that will never be heard—
Locked in a small, stiffened breast. O, I wonder
What God is thinking, you poor little bird.

WHEN THE LEAVES FLY.

Through the frosty air they whirl,
With a flutter, twist and twirl,
  Dizzy-headed things are they
Red-leaf boy and gold-leaf girl,
  Over glad to fly away

To the hollow, to the eaves,
Oh, you little giddy leaves,
  Stop one moment—call good-bye,
For the heart of Nature grieves
  When the summer children fly.

TO A DEAD BIRD

(On a woman's hat.)

Had I found you where the sunshine
  Sifted through the lacy screen
Of the overarching treetops
  To the mosses mottled green,
I could smooth your downy feathers,
  Saying "Happy fate was this,
Dying while the world was fairest
  From an overweight of bliss."

But too brief your time of harking
  To the summer's joyous laugh,
And your crimson throat was surely
  Stiffened ere it sang the half
Of the songs our Father gave you,
  That the forest fain had heard.
Unappeased, I mourn you, cheated
  Of your birthright, little bird.

WHEN THE DAYS GROW LONG.

Though a host of budding trees and bushes
  Down to me their sweetest odors fling,
And all nature laugh aloud for gladness,
  I am never merry in the spring.

When the restless birds come flying homeward
  From the south—when plumy grasses start,
Suddenly some thornless flower pricks me,
  Or the fragrance of a jonquil wrings my heart.

Ere the world had seen so many Aprils,
  Did this life of mine, I wonder, press
In the veins of some young growing thing
  Aching with the season's loveliness?

A REVELATION.

The night was long and the shadows spread
As far as the eye could see.
I stretched my hands to a human Christ,
And he walked through the dark with me.

Out of the dimness at last we came,
Our feet on the dawn-warmed sod,
And I saw by the light in his wondrous eyes
I walked with the Son of God.

IN AUTUMN.

Autumn stillness over all,
One by one the treasures fall
  From the old tree's summer gains,
Poor, stiff leaves that seem to hold
Yet a little touch of gold
  In their pretty penciled veins.

Like the old tree, softly fanned
By the autumn wind, we stand
  With our old deeds downward cast,
Stretching empty arms to Thee,
Knowing fairer things will be
  When the shorter days have passed.

A TIME OF CHANGE.

In the air one thrill of song,
But the Maydays grow too long.
Seems the jonquil nothing but
Golden pain and tears to shut
Fast within its fluted brim.
Seems the robin's morning hymn
Filled with sad complaint and woe.
From the rarest things that grow
Hasten love and life to go.

Now the wearied maples flush,
But the sober-coated thrush,
Planning flight, no longer grieves
At the fall of scarlet leaves.
Chill the air, but loving eyes
Watch us from the autumn-skies
With their changing blue and gray.
Ah, no longer we shall say
Love and life have flown away.

COMPLETION.

We leave so many things unfinished here,
  For we are weak and faint, and life not long.
The singer's voice is silenced just before
  He makes the final stanza for his song.

The artist's trembling fingers lay aside
  His color tubes and brushes wet with paint,
The image in his heart still glowing bright,
  The picture on the canvas dim and faint.

God makes the twisted buds upon the rose
  The pledges of more brilliant beauty soon.
The green young promises the springtime holds
  All find fulfillment in the perfect June.

He made us in his likeness, and I know
  Our highest reachings come from him, so I
Have learned to see in each unfinished work
  An earnest of completion by and by.

THE CLOSE OF SUMMER.

Summer's lived her last sweet day;
But before she went away,
Lest the children be bereft,
In their clinging care she left
Perfumed memories of hours
Spent in comradeship with flowers,
Learning in the field and wood
More and more that God is good.

He is love. This message sweet
They have heard the sea repeat,
Now in murmurs low, subdued,
Now in bright and buoyant mood;
They have seen it written large
On the purple hills, a charge
To be kind as He is kind,
Tender-hearted, leave behind
No regret to throb and burn
When their sun-kissed faces turn
Home again. Though winds blow chill,
All the child-hearts carol still.
Summer's gone away, but she
Leaves to them this legacy.

HOME COMING.

A row of towering hollyhocks,
A flash of color from clustered phlox,
A whiff of fragrance from beds of pinks,
A golden rose where a brown bee drinks,
A flash and flutter of sweet pea wings,
A gay confusion of growing things.
No dearer flowers were ever known
Than these in Grandmother's garden grown.

A gentle stir in the summer air.
The morning glories still tremble where
The sun's hot rays cannot reach to scorch,
And there, in the cool of the painted porch,
With lights and shadows from vines that lace
Sketching their fancies upon her face,
Grandmother stands with her eyes aglow—
Her arms outreaching—she loves us so.

Another summer has come and passed.
The morning-glories have all shut fast
Their filmy trumpets of white and blue,
The pinks lived sadly their season through.
They need no longer to toss and sway,
Since Grandmother's eyes are so far away.

We hush our voices and go no more
A happy troop to the farmhouse door,
For she has passed, with her work all done,
Up to a city that needs no sun.
I know her home must be fair to see,
And love to fancy her paths may be
Bordered with flowers like those that grew
Within the garden her children knew.

By and by, when their work is done,
Grandmother's children will, one by one,
Slip from their places and go to her,
And warned, perhaps, by the leaves astir,
She'll be at the door with her eyes aglow—
Her arms outreaching—she loves us so.

THE CHILDREN'S SUMMER.

Home again, and with buoyant feet
The children come to us, all their sweet
Sun-kissed faces a-smile, aglow,
Their hands are filled till they overflow
With wildwood treasures and meadow-bloom,
With dazzling color and mixed perfume.

Ah, those days in the wild, free air,
With eyes a-sparkle and tossing hair,
They sang and caroled, for speech seemed
brusque,
And roamed the open from dawn till dusk.

Something sweeter their child-eyes met
Than sweet-breathed clover and mignonette,
Something of far more beauty too
Than roses' crimson or harebells' blue—
Something brighter than goldenrod—
They looked and smiled—in the face of God.

INDIAN SUMMER.

She would make herself beloved and missed,
So the fleeing Autumn stops to twist
Hazy folds about her faded face.
On the hills a-tiptoe, for a space
She is standing in a borrowed dress,
Wearing Summer's name and loveliness,
Yearningly we gaze; for soon the spot
Glorified by her will know her not.

THE CHILDREN'S HARVEST.

Out from the trees and meadows
  The green and the gold have fled,
And brown on the woodland pathways
  The drifted leaves lie dead.

A hush broods over the hilltop
  Since children and birds took flight,
And thick on the trees' bare branches
  The hoar-frost glistens white.

And yet when the earth lies sleeping
  Deep under the winter snows,
There will be in the children's vision
  The bright rare hue of the rose.

The breath of the meadow lilies
  Will sweeten the wintry air,
The harvested joy of summer
  Can make the whole year fair.

AFTER THE SUMMER.

So much of joy the summer held for me,
The wondrous turquoise reaches of the sea,
The wave-tossed, tinted shells upon the strand,
The pebbles glowing redly from the sand;
Sweet, idle time to watch the curlews pass
Between the ranks of swaying, salt-marsh grass.

Yet, somehow, at the summer's ending, when
I saw the lights of home shine out again,
I sent no backward yearning to the sea
And all the joys the summer held for me.
Regretful tears were far away. Instead,
"The coming home is best of all," I said.

Then let it be, dear Christ, when by and by
My happy summer here is spent, that I
May take my way unsaddened toward the place
That needs no light but shining of thy face.
Thy smile will be so loving, I shall say
"My summer-time was glad and flew away
On wings that seemed too fast and fleet, and yet
I somehow feel no yearning, no regret,
No wish that summer landscape to recall,
For coming home is sweetest, after all."

A BACKWARD GLANCE.

This is the time for a backward glancing
  Over the pathways that claimed our feet
When days were long and the light was golden,
  And breath of breezes was warm and sweet.

Living once more in those days of sunshine,
  And breathing in fancy their fragrance yet,
There are places roughened by thorns and briers,
  And shadowy ways we would not forget.

We blend them all in one glad thanksgiving,
  Those summer days in the field and wood,
Songs and stillness, and shade and sunshine,
  Briers and roses, for all were good.

Now, with the summer a sweet remembrance,
  With white snow heaped in a woolly mass
Over the trees and shrubs and bushes,
  And muffling the blades of the tender grass,

With crystal treasures, wee stars six-pointed,
  Hiding the tremors of nature's breast,
Earth today is as fair and spotless
  As one for a lengthened slumber dressed.

There has been so much of the yellow sunshine,
  So much singing of lark and thrush;
Sleep is good for the world is weary,
  Song less dear than the winter's hush.

We know in a day that is not far distant
  The muffled grasses will feebly stir,
And earth's stiff fingers throw off the covers
  That for a season have sheltered her.

Christ, we thank thee, that some day surely
  Under a cover as soft and deep
As drifted snowflakes on tender grasses,
  We thy beloved shall find our sleep.

That just as sure as the earth shall waken
  From winter's dreaming, and clear her eyes
Of snowy crystals to look about her,
  Some fair spring morning, we too shall rise.

A THANKSGIVING.

"So many gifts to thank Him for," I said,
"His life and his arising from the dead,
The days of sun and calm accorded me,
And best of all the hope of life to be.
So fair and smooth the way that I have come,
I fain would thank him but my lips are dumb."
Then all at once the outdoor stillness broke,
A childish voice beneath my window spoke;
I saw November snowflakes flash and shine
Upon a small, wan face upturned to mine.
I drew the little stranger in to rest,
And smoothed her tumbled hair upon my breast.
"Dear child," I said, "God's kingdom is of such,"
And then I heard a whisper, "Inasmuch
As thou hast made this little child to be
Less sad and wayworn, thou hast gladdened me."
The evening shades grew long and deepened, but
I held her fast and sung her eyelids shut.
Within my arms she nestled pink and warm,
And as I closer clasped her sleeping form
I knew the little child of God became
The thankful prayer my lips had tried to frame.

THE YEAR'S GOOD.

Too great the sum of my year's good to reckon,
So many memories sweet and tender beckon;
Of glad white days when hills and fields of clover
With tiny crystal stars were covered over;
Of young new days when maples swung their tassels,
And feathered things in treetops built their castles.
When gold and purple flags the iris flaunted
And all the whole wide, outdoor world was haunted
With sweet expectancy, then June, bright comer,
And all the gold fulfillment of the summer;
The mellow peace and hush of autumn's reigning,
Those days before she went, of tender feigning
That summer had returned and joy must follow,
When opal haze she left on hill and hollow.
Oh this, dear Christ, today is my Thanksgiving,
I thank thee for this whole sweet year of living.

I'LL LIVE MY THANKS.

A day for giving thanks, and though I come,
The year's good seems so great, it leaves me dumb.
I con the by-gone days. In each I see
So much more joy than ill that came to me.

So many loving pressures to thy heart,
And sudden dear reminders that thou art
Not far from any one of us; such sweet
Surprises dropped from heaven at my feet.

Then, as a little child seeks out the place
Where mother sits, and smiles into her face
The loving thanks it has no words to say,
I come to thee on this Thanksgiving day.

I gaze into thine eyes and see them shine,
I meet the yearning love they speak to mine;
This only can I say: "In days to be,
O loving Christ, I'll live my thanks to thee."

THANKSGIVING.

For my past, Lord, I would whisper
  Only thankful prayers to thee.
Looking back upon the picture
  I have left behind, I see
Sunny spots for which to thank thee.
  Though the landscape does not lack
Shadows with its brighter colors,
  Yet I thank thee—looking back.

For these present days how can I
  Aught but deep thanksgiving say?
For the fingers clasping those I
  Slip within them—for the way
Thou dost make thine own face shining
  When the sunlight seems to flee,
And dost clear the sky that stretches
  Dark and angry over me.

For my future, Lord, I thank thee;
  What am I that I should care
Though the shadows come, if, reading
  Of a city lying square,
I grow stronger for the journey,
  Till the entrance gates shall seem
Wide and open as the prophet
  Saw them shining in his dream.

THANKFULNESS.

I thank thee that so many saddening things
Thou art too tender, Lord, to let me know;
That thou dost hide my future, so that I
Can see no darkened way that I must go.

I thank thee for the leafless trees that stand
With whispered promises in each bare bough;
And for the leaves and blossoms yet unblown,
That spring will bear, dear Lord, I thank thee *now*.

I thank thee that my thoughts go straight to thee,
As sure as ever bird to hilltop soared;
That thou dost take my outstretched hand in thine,
And listen while I say, "I thank thee, Lord."

MY THANKSGIVING.

The haze of Indian summer dies away,
The snow-flakes fall in noiseless beauty down,
The autumn time's defection to atone
By spreading gently over all the brown

Of withered leaves and grasses. We have come,
Oh, Christ, dear Christ, our thankful prayers to say,
For all the twelve months past have held for us,
Too often we have let them slip away

Their good unheeded. Memory calls them back
A moment now for one last tender gaze.
We thank thee for the loving thought from thee,
That came to brighten each of last year's days.

It seems so little while since we were here
To give our thanks before and lose our fears,
And yet one more of our three score and ten
Has gone to sojourn with the vanished years.

Among the prayers that I would make today
For blessings that the season brings to me,
I give my thanks, oh loving Christ, for this
The year has brought me twelve months nearer thee.

UNDER THE ROSES.

One by-gone summer day in playful wise
My little sweetheart folded both her eyes
And her two hands and would not move nor stir,
While I with fallen roses covered her.

Once more my little sweetheart lays her down,
In smooth and glossy braids her hair of brown,
Her small, soft hands refolded still and meek,
The old-time pretty dimple dents her cheek,

As though beneath each tender blue-veined lid
A smile she could not drive away were hid.
Her face thrice-kissed, I leave my sweetheart so
A-smiling through the roses—and the snow.

UPREACHING.

This little song shall be for God, I said,
And when I sing it He will touch my head.
He gave me all the voice I have—and yet
I sing of birds and flowers, and I forget.
It would not come. The song refused to be.
I sat there in the meadow and could see
A tangle of wild blossoms, clover tops,
A bunch of daisy heads with jeweled drops.
And while the crickets chirped and locusts drummed,
The only tune that I have ever hummed
Came sounding in my ears and thrust aside
All thought of other songs. I opened wide
My arms to grasp—the sweetness nearer drew;
And I—I sang the only song I knew.
The hymn to God unsung, I grieved awhile;
Then all at once the meadow seemed to smile.
A little angel face seemed raised to me
From every flower's hollow. Could it be
Some meadow daisy, swaying on its stem
Had brought me nearer to His garment-hem?

AN ALLEGORY.

With skilful hand and true the painter wrought,
  One touch and then another added fair,
And some there were who gathered near to look,
  And stole away, ennobled unaware.

How was it?—at the nightfall, ere he left
  His long day's work, he gave just one false touch,
And they who came on tiptoe while he slept
  To view the finished picture, marveled much.

A moment of pained stillness, then the wreath
  Of laurel leaves that they had wound to lay
Upon his forehead, trod they underfoot,
  And leaving him to slumber, turned away.

THE FINDING.

Long time she sought her Lord, with heavy eyes.
The snow-wreaths passed, and came once more the spring.
In yonder bush a bird began to sing.
She heeded not, for gazing at the skies.

At last, forspent, with sobbing breath she crept
Close to the heart of kind old Mother-earth.
She heard its ceaseless throbs of pain and mirth,
And, ere she knew, a little time she slept.

Hark! What was that? The grasses' sudden stir?
Some tender blade emerging from the sod?
She raised her face enraptured; it was God
Through nature's myriad voices calling her.

THE BRAHMIN'S PRAYER.

He prays, and one whose heart is love, I think
  Bends over him, though Brahma's ears are
    stone,
For by and by he rises comforted,
  And feels himself less wretched and alone.

"Yes, I shall find Nirvana at the last,
  And all this restlessness of mine shall be
Extinguished like a candle flame at night,
  No more to be remembered," whispers he.

Who knows what glad surprise may by and by
  Before that wearied Brahmin's vision flit?
Our Father's City has so many gates—
  Three to the east, north, south and west of it.

AFTERGLOW.

With drudging cares she lived her days, and when
No year was left of her three-score and ten,
At twilight's silver grayness toward the place
Where hopes had long been buried, turned her face.
She touched the spot with reverent finger-tips,
A moment stooped and pressed it with her lips,
But swift uprose, with eyes dilated wide,
For one with noiseless feet was by her side.

Then "Come," he said, and "Yea," she answered quick,
But somehow tears surprised her fast and thick.
Her startled face upraised, "One hour," she plead,
"To finish my good-byes and leave my dead."
The faded deeps of her old eyes he scanned,
His fingers touched her faithful, workworn hand,
Her patient face. "Not so," he said, "not so;
I bid them rise and follow where we go."

A PRAYER.

If I knew that in the night my soul
  Back to God would speed, then all day through
I would smile on those that I must leave,
  And would say the kindest words I knew,
Hoping after I had gone that they might say,
"She was sweetest just before she went away."

But because I cannot know what time
  They will search and find my spirit gone,
Whether in the night when others sleep,
  Or perchance at breaking of the dawn,
This the prayer I have most need to say,
"Let my words be kind and tender every day."

MISUNDERSTOOD.

Tender wildwood notes he took,
Laughing whispers from the brook,
  And a secret, gay and glad,
That the feathered things let fall.
In a song he bound them all
  Just to make the world less sad.

And the people hushed and still,
Listened in their darkness, till
  It was finished, then apart
Turned with wistfulness that seemed
Never to have guessed or dreamed
  That he sang with breaking heart.

INTERPRETATION.

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He thought of all the heart-aches he had known,
  And singing in the twilight bowed his head.
"The world will hear and pass unheeding on,
  And no one ever understand," he said.

A thousand hearts grew hushed to hear the song,
  And eyes that mocked before grew soft and dim,
They strained to see the singer through the dusk,
  And smiling through their tears claimed kin with him.

RELEASE.

Winter's hands had hidden from our sight
  All the fields that made the summer green.
Earth was sleeping with a cloud of snow
  Laid upon her bosom as a screen.

Came at last the spring, with eyes that yearned
  For the grasses lying low and chill.
Though her face was wan, her buoyant feet
  Danced across the dazzling fields until

In the white, unbroken crust they made
  Little rifts where'er they touched, and then
Sun-warmed grasses, trembling with delight,
  Lifted up their pointed spears again.

IN PASSING.

If thou but hold me close I shall not heed
  The flowing water and the moaning blast,
Nor strangeness of the banks where rush and reed
    In chilly dampness blow,
  Then hold me fast,
    Christ Jesus, when I go.

If thou but whisper low, I shall not care
  What dreary echoes in the valley be,
What gloomy noises fill the heavy air,
    And to loud wailing grow;
  Then speak to me,
    Christ Jesus, when I go.

If thou but smile on me I shall not note
  The dusk enfolding me a little while,
Nor darkness of the waves that round the boat
    With saddened murmurs flow;
  Then do thou smile,
    Christ Jesus, when I go.

A HOPE.

I know God loves all helpless feathered things,
And when the sparrows fall with draggled wings
From out their storm-rocked nest, I know he sees,
For tender eyes he has for such as these.
I know there is a country fair and far,
Within whose borders living waters are.
Green trees are there with branches spreading wide
Above the sloping banks on either side.

And since God's trees are troubled by no storm,
I love to fancy that their branches form
Safe, sheltered hollows where they fly to rest,
Those little sparrows fallen from the nest
In this our windblown world. We call them dead;
But since long years ago our Saviour said
No sparrow falls without his Father's ken,
I think that he may let them nest again.

ASSURANCE.

God would not grant us here the gift of love,
If in our passing through the gates above
We needs must leave it on the outer side.
The city's gates will surely open wide
That we may bear it with us as we go,
For love came first from God himself, I know.

And so I hold my dear ones fast and warm,
And if at evening-time some weary form
From my caresses softly glides away,
"For just a little while, good-bye," I say.
"Dear eyes I know as loved and loving, ye,
Though looking in God's face will not for me
Forget your old sweet speech. I feel, I know
The changeless Father will not change you so."

ACCLIMATURE.

Beaten paths are, to my thinking,
Safest ways; so, timid, shrinking,
  When I go among the stars,
I shall stop, with pulses surging,
Like a butterfly emerging
  From its shattered prison bars.

As it stands a season waiting,
With its untried wings vibrating,
  Hardly daring to explore
Clover-tops or ox-eye daisies,
Or the dozen pretty mazes
  Through the jonquil's yellow door,

With my wings unused to flying,
And too new for careless trying,
  Eyes all blinded by the light,
I shall need a moment's resting,
And a little time for testing
  If my wings be strong for flight.

"NOT FAR FROM ANY ONE OF US."

I cannot read the words with eyes so weak,
Yet I am sure as when some dear friends speak
With smiles and loving gestures, face to face,
That in this rose's pink and hollowed place,
God's message waits my longing eyes to meet,
For nothing else could make it half so sweet.

And so with all these daisies that I hold;
A message lingers in their white and gold;
The while I strain my eyes I feel the touch
Of unseen fingers. Surely there is much
Of God himself in simple outdoor things,
That we may see before we have our wings.

A MEMORY.

How it chanced we do not know,
  She learned in some way that
There was a meadow far away
  Where little children sat,
Where song-birds stayed the whole year through,
  And grasses kept their green,
And butterflies with broken wings
  Were sorrows never seen.
We grieved at first to think that she
  Had learned so strange a thing,
We searched the forests and the fields,
  And coaxed the birds to sing.
We would not let her see the way
  Our meadow daisies fade,
So when within the yellow disks
  There came a darker shade,
And slender petals drooping down
  Began to lose their white,
We drew them from her little hands,
  And thrust them out of sight.
We sang to her, and tried to keep
  Our lips from trembling too,
We told her where the brownies hide,
  And what the fairies do.
We sang of all the pretty sights
  That come in with the springs,
Of little birds with fuzzy breasts,
  And sunshine on their wings.

One summer day when pleasant rains
  Had made the woodsprings gush,
We stopped our singing all at once,
  And bade the song-birds hush.
We searched the forests and the fields
  For flowers white and sweet,
And left some in her tiny hands
  And others at her feet.

GOOD-BYE.

How can I say God speed you, when I know
The words must be a prayer to let you go
From out my sight? I love you, dear,
And those we love the best we want most near.

But yet I say it. May God speed you. See,
I loose my hold upon you. There will be
The ocean's breadth between us, very soon,
And when the sun is over me, the moon
Will light your path and shine upon your way,
And yet—God speed you—is the prayer I say.

A DISCORD.

The thrushes and linnets
  Sang sweetly last June,
But now they are rasping
  And sing out of tune.

The round ox-eye daisies
  Once gladdened my sight,
They are now only yellow spots
  Bordered with white.

The bees buzz about them;
  I shrink at the sound,
The buttercups, too,
  I could crush to the ground.

How could I have thought
  They were gold in the grass,
When every round petal
  Seems heavy with brass?

Sweet sounds and sweet odors
  I wish I could smother,
For summer and I are
  At odds with each other.

STRAYED.

My voice has grown discordant, so
The little songs I used to know
  Have gone where lost things be.
They are too small, I know, to mourn,
And yet they are too weak to scorn,
  They are a part of me.

Perhaps, when summer birds return,
With southern fashions we can learn,
  And bees begin to hum,
Half hidden in some fragrant thing,
Or tucked beneath a robin's wing,
  My truant songs may come.

PRESAGE.

I have not lived so long that I can pass
A yellow flower hiding in the grass,
Nor walk with empty hands where pebbles shine;
I call such small things of the meadow mine;
And if the petals from the rose-bush drop,
When I am coming up the path, I stop.
These small pink messages I understand,
And take them lovingly within my hand.

I know that sometime other days must be,
When other things will come that I must see,
When messages will reach me, not from flowers,
And I might walk the meadow path for hours,
And see no pebbles shining; when my face
Will give no sign of seeing, nor a trace
Of even caring whether pink or brown
The petals that the rose-bush flutters down.

BY THE ROADSIDE.

The little flowers along the dusty road—
The yellow daisies—bending with their load
Of undried dew, seem reaching hands to me,
As if imploring I should wait and see
The secret only they can show, that lies
Within their just-awakened golden eyes.

And so I stop along the meadow's edge,
Or linger for a moment by the hedge
To shake the dewdrops out and feel the thrill
Of green leaves brushing on my hands, until
I look up to the sky that stretches blue,
And see God's face a moment shining through.

WHY I SING.

Long, so long, the winter lingered,
With impatient hand I fingered
Bush and shrub, but they were sleeping, death,
not life seemed ruling then.
Winter leaning on his crutches,
Heeded not my tender touches,
And I said, and mourned to say it, "I can never
sing again."

Then the days grew longer, brighter,
And my prisoned thoughts grew lighter,
All within, and all without me, gladdened at the
sight of spring.
And in hearing and in seeing,
All my soul sprang into being,
For I felt the love around me, and I could not
choose but sing.

TONIGHT.

Tonight I almost envy you
  Your quiet bed that seems
Too narrow for the coming in
  Of any noise or dreams.

So when the earth is not too hard—
  A moist and pleasant mold—
With dandelions here and there,
  Like scattered bits of gold,

Then maybe I shall break my way
  The earth and grasses through,
And smiling with my drowsy eyes
  Shall come to sleep with you.

RENUNCIATION.

First I gave my springtime up
Daffodil and buttercup,
With the early fragrance clinging
To their petals, all the singing
That could come from trees new budded,
And from meadows sunshine flooded.

Then I gave my summer over
Crimson rose and purple clover,
Snowy daisies, golden centred,
Lilies that the wild bees entered
Humming drowsy tunes, till they
Wooed the sweetness all away.

Autumn, too, I yielded up
Every red-bronze acorn cup,
Every pointed sumach cluster,
Every leaf of fevered lustre,
All the tender softened haze
That could mark my autumn days.

What is left for me to yield?
Snow is hiding bush and field,
All the birds have southward flown;
In the Northland I alone
Stand with empty arms, bereft,
Having only winter left.

WAITING.

There is sympathy between that
  Wintry little brook and me,
For our songs are frozen in us.
  All the winter we must be

Hushed and quiet as the green things
  Wrapped in woolly robes of white.
Every day must be as songless
  As the stillness of the night.

By and by the pink arbutus
  On the hill will start and stir
Under weight of last year's leafage
  Folding brownly over her.

Then the rigid lines will vanish
  From the little brook's cold mouth,
And her songs come back as swiftly
  As the bluebirds from the south.

I shall linger near to listen,
  Half in envy of her, then—
Ere I know it—I myself shall
  Find my little songs again.

AT TWILIGHT.

The evening comes, the dandelions fold,
The sturdy calyx hides the shining gold,
And jealously will guard it, day by day,
Till all the hoarded treasure melt away.

But changes over dreamers often creep,
And as these yellow flowers fall asleep,
I know they will not wake again, and so
"God's little flowers, good-night," I whisper low.

I know they sleep and will not waken, but
It is not sad our weary eyes to shut,
And I would sleep beside these pretty things,
If, like them, all my gold would change to wings.

FOUR-SCORE.

Soon his eyes will grow unheedful
Of the things I call so needful
  To my summer; he will note
Neither brook on mosses splashing,
Nor the brilliant colors flashing
  From the bluebird's slender throat.

Though the waters shine or darken
As they flow, he will not hearken
  To the tale they fain would sing
Gladly, blithely, to each comer,
Of the way the laughing summer
  Stole the laurels from the spring.

This I know, so daily, nightly,
Do I clasp his fingers tightly
  In my own, for any day
He may travel far, beguiling
With his wonted placid smiling
  All the strangeness of the way.

HUSHED.

What would *you* do if you longed to sing,
If a song *would* come with the balmy spring?
If you felt you could sing what you could not speak,
And trying to prove it, your voice turned weak?
What would you do if the notes half sung
Should die away on your eager tongue,
As the sudden fear on your heart should pour,
That your poor little song had been sung before,
Sung in a sweeter and stronger tone
That makes yours seem but a feeble moan?
What would you do? You would leave the light,
And sit as *I* do with lips shut tight,
You would crush the fancies that round you cling
And say that it hurts you too much to sing.

ROOM FOR TWO.

Dusty yarrow by the pathway,
  Bending meekly as we pass.
Sunshine lighting all the meadow
  And the blue-bells in the grass.

But I do not feel the sunshine,
  Maud, my Maud, has been unkind;
She has said the path is narrow
  And that I must walk behind.

Now, perhaps from very rapture,
  All the singing birds are still;
But the cricket chirps for gladness,
  And the locust's cry is shrill.

Past the fields of waving barley,
  Where the nibbling field-mice frisk,
Where the daisy, uninvited,
  Stands with upturned yellow disk,

Maud and I walk on together;
  We are happy through and through,
For the path that seemed so narrow,
  Has grown wide enough for two.

AT PARTING.

Forgive me, dearest, if I look
Too long upon you, as a book
  That I would learn, and so
Must strain my eyes in reading, but
To feel the jealous lids will shut
  Before the end I know.

Forgive me, dearest, if I touch
These braided tresses overmuch.
  This little curl I press,
With thought of days when, far apart,
No tender wile of lover's art
  Can make the distance less.

Forgive me, dearest, if too near
I bend, your slightest word to hear.
  I listen now, you see,
For words that you may try to speak
Some tender moment when too weak
  Your voice for reaching me.

"WHATEVER HE WOULD LIKE TO HAVE ME DO."

So many paths to press, or leave unpressed,
To take me to the valley—or the crest
Of some green hill. Christ Jesus, help me know
The ways that thou wouldst like to have me go.

So many words to say, or leave unsaid,
Before the wraith of evening-time shall spread
Her hushing fingers on my lips. I pray
For words that thou wouldst like to have me say.

So many things to do, or leave undone,
That I must choose between before the sun
Withdraws its light. Then strengthen me anew
To do what thou wouldst like to have me do.

THE BOOK.

She lost the book she loved, and all her world
  Was wrapped in darkness for awhile, but when
Long, tearful days had passed, one came to her,
  And slipped the volume in her hand again.

She turned its pages, fearful lest the smile
  Of Him she held most dear had grown too dim
To light the gulf she pictured stretched between
  The sinfulness of her poor trembling self and
    Him,

The Lord of earth and heaven—righteous wrath
  Upon his face, so just, so far away,
If Christ the tender one, were far removed,
  How could her heart find hope and faith to
    pray?

She read the words again. Some, here and there,
  Were not as she remembered them before,
And others she had known were blotted out,
  Yet still the Christ was smiling as of yore.

But who was this, with lovelight in his look,
  A tenderness surpassing woman's grace?
She clasped her hands and bowed her head, for, lo!
  That wondrous look was on her Father's face.

"BABIE STUART."

Did they fancy while they dressed you,
  Royal robes for one so small,
That they needs must get you quickly
  On the canvas if at all?

And did one, perhaps in waiting
  Look through sudden tears on you,
Kiss you when your round cap's border
  Let a soft stray lock come through?

That big treasure you are clasping,
  (Apple? Ball? What is it, sweet?)
Did it make the time go faster?
  Did it rest your little feet?

Standing all those weary minutes
  At the painter's will demure,
Though your heart was in the open
  With the sunshine, I am sure.

Scarcely four short years vouchsafed you!
  Was your childhood put aside
With the little gowns and playthings,
  Babie Stuart, when you died?

Or unchanged has it been left you
  All these passing cycles through,
Have the later generations
  Been as but a day to you?

Does the children's lover clasp you
  Now, as when with footfall low,
Shy at changing worlds, you sought him,
  Two long centuries ago?

TO A LONG-AGO MAID.*

Within that old Virginia house it lies;
So small a thing it is to draw our eyes,
A satin belt turned yellow long ago
Some little Boston maid's; we only know

That round her girlish slenderness it met
The night she made her bow to Lafayette.
I seem to see you, little maid, today,
Through all the years that stretch between, the way

Your finger-tips upheld your pretty gown,
Your soft cheeks flushed and sweet young eyes cast down.
And did your heart beat hard and fast the while
You dropped your timid curtsy? Did he smile

Upon the flushing cheek and downcast lid?
Oh, little Boston maid, I hope he did.
I wonder if God kept you here to be
A white-haired, placid woman, at your knee

Your children's children pressing eager-eyed,
To hear the story told; or if you died
Before this satin belt was stained by years,
If someone softly laid it by, with tears?

*Whose satin belt worn at the reception to Lafayette in 1824 is among the relics at Mount Vernon.

HELEN KELLER.

Things there be too dim and misty
For the sight,
And God watching o'er this little
Child of light,
May have seen the blue eyes growing
All too keen,
Piercing through the clouds that cover
The unseen.
There are sounds—we do not hear them,
You and I,
But this wee one, looking upward
To the sky,
May have heard strange voices sounding
In the air,
And have felt the gentle breathing
On her hair.
So he pressed her eyes and left her
In the dark,
Touched the little ears, and made the
Noises hark.
There were words she might have spoken,
Best unsaid
For awhile. His kind hand resting
On her head
Took the power of saying from her,
Left a hush,
As a little song is driven
From a thrush.
For a time all sound and vision
Must not be,
But within her tiny hand he
Slipped a key,

Saying to the troubled baby
"Do not cry,
This will open wondrous secrets
By and by."
Ah, the time has come. The portals
Under guard,
That we grope to reach, and find so
Tightly barred,
Open to her little fingers
On the latch,
Sounds and sights that we can never
Hope to catch,
Reach her with celestial clearness,
Straight from One
Who this little while had kept her
From the sun.

THE CHILD.

When Mary sang to him, I wonder if
  His baby hand stole softly to her lips,
And, smiling down, she needs must stop her song
  To kiss and kiss again his finger-tips.

I wonder if, his eyelids being shut,
  And Mary bending mutely over him,
She felt her eyes, as mothers do today,
  For very depth of love grow wet and dim.

Then did a sudden presage come to her
  Of bitter looks and words and thorn-strewn
    street?
And did she catch her breath and hide her face,
  And shower smothered kisses on his feet?

L. of C.

THE CHRIST-CHILD.

On other days we see our risen Lord,
  Who sitteth at the hand of God, but when
The year grows old, one blessed hour breaks,
  And unto us a child is born again.

The three Wise Men we follow, see with them
  The whiteness of the night, and hear the strains
Of music, not of earth; a star shines out
  And marks a silver pathway o'er the plains.

We find the dim-light manger, gaze upon
  One little face that lights up all about,
Oh, Christmas Child, how dark must be that inn,
  Which had so many guests it shut thee out.

FOR THE CHRIST CHILD.

We can fancy how He lay
In her arms in baby way,
Tiny, dimpled fingers curled
Like the velvet petals furled
In a rosebud tinted pink.
Ah, what did the mother think
When she cradled soft and warm
In her arms His little form?
Sweetest eyes the world has known
Gazing back into her own
Must have made them overbrim,
She to have the care of Him!

Still we read and read again,
How those wise, expectant men
Came, star-guided, to the place
Brightened by that young child-face.
"Ah! dear little Christ," we say,
"Had our feet been shown the way
To your resting-place, we too
Would have brought fair gifts to you."

Then the Lord Christ smiles, we know,
Glad that we should love Him so.
"Bring your little gifts to me;
I have need of them," saith He.
"I would make my birthday fair
For the children everywhere.
If there be some over-sad,
Search them out and make them glad.
Change their tears to smiles. 'Twill be
Just the same as done to me."

ON CHRISTMAS EVE.

If I might hold the Christ-Child to my heart
  And touch with reverent hands the clustered hair
About his forehead white and innocent,
  All earth and sky for me would grow more fair.

But since his little face will not appear
  To mine that watches for it through the eve,
I will hold fast some weary baby-face
  That others call unlovely, nor will grieve;

For nestling warm and fast the little head,
  And hushing with my kisses all its cries,
The while I bend to watch it I shall find
  Another Child make answer through its eyes.

CHRISTMAS DAY.

Boughs of evergreen and flashing holly,
  Chime of Christmas bells upon the air,
Flying feet and little children's voices
  Making joyful music everywhere.

Laughing mothers draw their children closer,
  But my heart is leaning out to you,
Smileless ones, who hark to childish music
  Only in your wistful fancy, who

Sit today with eyes too blurred for seeing
  How the scarlet holly clusters glow,
With your souls too yearningly outreaching
  For the ones who just a year ago

Made your world seem golden with their laughter.
  Everything is changed now—gray and dim;
Just last year you told the Christ Child's story,
  Now they spend their Christmas Day with him.

And because his love is very tender,
  And the little ones are far away
From the mothers wont to make so blissful
  All the flying hours of Christmas Day.

I have fancied that he draws them closely
  To his side, some gift, a sweet surprise,
Softly slipping in their childish fingers,
  While he smiles into their shining eyes.

CHRISTMAS NIGHT.

I can see the mellow light
Of that first glad Christmas night
  Breaking through the gloom and gray;
See the path the Wise Men took
When that brilliant star forsook
  Its old course to lead the way.

I can fancy the surprise
In the cattle's meek brown eyes
  At the little stranger-guest;
Seem to see his child-face smile
In the mother's eyes, the while
  She is singing him to rest.

On the ground the snow lies white,
On my hearth the wood-fire light
  Glows and dances, red and fleet,
While I gaze out through the dark
Of the evening time and hark
  For the music of his feet.

He will come, I know, I know,
Not as came he long ago
  To a manger set apart
For his slumber, deep and still;
Nay, the little Christ-Child will
  Make his resting-place my heart.

AT CHRISTMAS TIME.

No pictured form my eyes can satisfy,
They cannot paint His child-face so that I
  Can scan it long, and say: "That must have
    been
The look he wore—that little child for whom
I read that long ago there was no room
  Within the inn."

My words are weak as colors artists use.
The smile upon the child-face I would lose
  By groping after words that cannot be.
And yet—although the lights are low and dim,
This Christmas Eve I have a glimpse of Him—
  My *soul* can see.

THE CHILD OF GALILEE.

I think that song and sunshine made Him glad,
As they do us, that quickly He grew sad
At sight of some poor bird with broken wing,
And if its song was hushed, He ceased to sing.

Sometimes, in quiet mood, I fancy He
Sweet confidences told at Mary's knee.
There childish griefs, if such He had, grew less,
Or fading out made room for happiness.
He loved her much, and told her often, too,
And she? She pressed him close, as mothers do.

I think when Joseph, wearied, turned to leave
The hard day's toil behind him in the eve,
He found a child-face smiling at the door,
And murmured to himself that more and more
The little God-lent Jesus grew in grace,
Each day the lovelight sweeter in his face.

EASTER TIME.

"Jonquil, Daffodil, Narcissus,
Come, the sunshine waits to kiss us!"
So the Crocus may have said,
For they followed, buoyant-hearted,
When the soft earth-covers parted
And she raised her gentle head.

Now, in all their Easter glory
We can read their winter's story
How they lay with fast-shut eyes,
With the brown earth clasping, warming,
While their wings unseen were forming
For the day when they should rise.

Just a change that seemed like dying,
Just that little time of lying
Sleep-bound, then the breaking sod
For their rising, fair and tender,
To this Easter morning's splendor,
And the waiting smile of God.

TO THE CROCUSES.

I lay my cheek to the brown earth clod,
To hear the word that you bring from God.
This is the message, you dear, bright things,
All of the winter through, your wings
Waited, folded, till God's voice spoke,
When undelaying and glad you broke
Out from the brown earth's loosened hold
Into the sunshine above the mold.
Now those days in the darkness seem
Vague, unpainful, like some dim dream.

Oh, little faces, you bend and nod,
And I look up to our Father God,
So dear the message I read in you,
Sweet Easter crocuses, gold and blue.

AWAKING.

As the tender leaves, outshaken
From their winter cradles, waken
  To a world that seems to be
From a heavy slumber broken,
With a snow-flower for a token,
  Christ, dear Christ, awaken me.

As with sound of softened laughter
Fast the wakened brook runs after
  Garment-hem of Spring, may I
Over hill and through the hollow
With as buoyant courage follow
  After One that passes by.

A RESURRECTION.

Purple clovers swayed and blew,
Soft and fair the landscape grew
  Through its veil of early mist;
But I only laid my face
To the grass above the place
  Where hers rested, long unkissed.

Cool and fresh the tender spears
Of the grasses. Last night's tears
  Lingered on them—wet my cheek.
Someone surely must have wept
In the darkness, that she slept
  Impotent to move or speak.

Then the stir of wings I heard
Over me, as if a bird
  Flying earthward made the sound;
And no more I watched to see
Young eyes looking up to me
  Through the clover-dotted ground.

But I lingered, hushed and glad,
Feeling that the heavens had
  Drawn apart a little space
For my seeing, till I knew
That the green turf overgrew
  Just the semblance of her face.

MY HOPE.

We know as mothers comfort, so does He,
And when the moment comes you cannot see—
The old earth sights and noises growing dim,
You only grope in terror after Him,
I think it will be with a tender clasp
He'll take your hands or even let you grasp
His own if longingly you feel for them.
He will not make you touch His garment-hem.
He knows you need a pressure warmer far,
And as we feel the little children are
All safely folded, so I think He will
Hold very close the trembling ones until
The bitterness of death is put aside,
And they can see the mansions opened wide.

AN EASTER LONGING.

They gazed upon the canvas long and deep,
And saw the Christ, arisen from his sleep,
In flowing robes that knew no spot or seam,
And Mary smiling awed as in a dream.

"And were his eyes so kind?" one whispered. "See
The tender way they follow you and me!"
Awhile they lingered hushed, then turned away.
"The Lord is risen indeed," I heard them say.

"Oh, living Christ," I murmured, "I who lack
The painter's skill of hand, must I stand back
And have no part in showing thou didst rise?
That look of tender yearning in thine eyes?"

He led me in the Easter morning gray
To one whose feet had faltered by the way.
"Bid life return to Hope who now lies dead,
And trampled Faith to rise on wings," he said.
"The weary form hold close to thee, and then
This Easter morning I shall rise again."

WHERE IS THE BABY?

"Baby, baby," sings a thrush,
But no answer—just a hush,
Broken by the brook's low moans
As it hurries o'er the stones.

Then the oak tree, tall and gray,
Where the baby used to play,
Tosses down an acorn-cup,
Saying, "Baby, pick it up."

Still the pretty daisies nod,
Slender sprays of golden-rod
From the steep embankment, send
Sweet allurements as they bend.

What, unnoticed! All the day
Must the flowers vainly sway,
And, grown weary, stoop to look
At their image in the brook?

Over all the wood is peace,
One by one the voices cease;
All the coaxing birds are dumb,
For the baby does not come.

CHILDREN'S DAY.

In the treetops sing the robins,
All their tender breasts aflame
With the glory of the summer
That in trailing garments came,

Through the forest and the meadow,
Dropping fragrance everywhere,
Leaving here a dash of color,
And a wave of music there.

Ah, they cannot cease their singing;
Little red breasts glow and thrill
As a welcome, sweet and tender,
To the little ones they trill.

For this sunny day is sacred
To our darlings, set apart
For their coming to the One who
Drew the children to his heart

In a far-off Eastern country
When he walked the ways of men,
We have told our darlings often
How the children nestled then

On his bosom—how they loved him,
Smiling softly at his touch;
They have listened, hushed and happy,
For they love him just as much.

And their smiles are just as ready,
And no trust more sweet could be,
Just as rapt their little faces
As those ones in Galilee.

So today I love to fancy
That his arm encircles them,
And they "see his face" while we can
Only touch His garment-hem.

FOR CHILDREN'S DAY.

There's a pleasant stir and flutter as the Southern
breezes pass
Over tangles of wild blossoms and the tassels of
the grass.
"Oh," the oxeye daisies murmur, with their faces
all alight,
"We are glad our eyes are golden and our petals
are so white."

With the last night's dewdrops clinging, like
white jewels in their hair,
Crimson clovers tossing softly make more sweet
the summer air.
All about them yellow sunshine; overhead a sky
of blue;
"Oh," they whisper to each other, "aren't you
very glad we grew?"

"Why," the Southern wind just pauses for a
moment in its flight,
"Why white daisies and red clovers, do you
quiver with delight?"
"Oh, because the children need us," oxeye daisies
answer low,
"And," the clovers murmur shyly, "and because
they love us so."

"They are coming soon to take us, and their little
feet will fly,
To the church whose pointed steeple reaches up
into the sky.
In the morning near the altar we shall hear the
organ play,
And the little children singing, for tomorrow's
Children's Day."

THE CHILDREN'S DAY.

I wonder what they do this Children's Day,
Those little young-faced angels passed away
From mother-sight and mother-arms. Ah me!
I fain would know what Children's Day can be
In that bright city where they go. Once more
I scan those pages often read before.
I see the little children, loved, caressed,
And nestled with fond touches on his breast.
I think he surely must have loved them much,
Those little children, when he said of such
His Father's Kingdom was to be, the while
He answered look with look and smile with smile.

I know he cannot change, but is today
The same as yesterday. I know the way
Is not less easy now for little feet
Than when adown each Galilean street
They gladly ran to meet him. Ah, I know,
He holds them fast today, he loves them so.
And then those little ones to you and me
More near and dear than those of Galilee,
Who took the sunshine with them when they
passed
Beyond our sight—he surely holds them fast.

This Children's Day as sweetly on his breast
The little, shy newcomers take their rest
As those who feel his clasp no longer strange,
Since many years ago they made the change
From mother-arms to his. Our eyes are dim
The while we listen to the children's hymn,
Each missing some small voice or tender face,

Whose absence seems to leave an empty space
Among the palms and lilies. Yet we wear
A smile upon our faces, for most fair
We know that Jesus makes this Children's Day
For all the darlings who have passed away.

ON CHILDREN'S DAY.

Last Children's Day two voices made for me
The church one thrill of music. There could be
No sweeter sounds, I thought, for me to hear
Than those dear alto notes and treble clear.

Young timid eyes the church aisles wandered through,
Until, like little birds, upon the pew
Where I was smiling back they settled down,
Two eyes of sapphire blue and two of brown.

A year has passed, and now they pity me.
"So changed for her the Children's Day must be.
The sunshine taken out, her heart," they say,
"Must have a dreary ache this Children's Day."

But still I smile and listen. Not more clear
Is that sweet childish treble others hear
Than one small alto voice whose tender tone
Through distance coming reaches me alone.

Not only eyes of sapphire blue seek mine,
But two of lustrous darkness glow and shine,
And when the tender children's prayer is said,
I see the reverent bowing of a head

With chestnut curls encrowned. No others see;
They think that only golden hair can be
Within my vision now; but still I know
That Jesus Christ who loves the children so

Has let one darling leave her resting place
Upon his bosom, that her childish face
Might look in mine a moment, for not far
Is that bright kingdom where God's children are.

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